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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
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COUNTRY Iraq

SUBJECT Railways and Highways

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1. [REDACTED] three stretches of road by car; Baghdad - Babylon, Mosul - Shaqlawa, and Baghdad - Wadi Tharthar.
2. The road from Baghdad to Babylon traverses level country and contains no grades of any consequence. It has an asphalt surface but no solid base and the surface is badly broken. There was no evidence of any attempt to maintain or improve it. There are some concrete bridges, all of two-lane width, and adequate for heavy trucks. The road is only a bare two-lane width that will hardly accommodate two large trucks, but there are good shoulders.
3. The trip south was made via the more direct route and the return via Hindiya Barrage. The round trip of about 125 miles required four hours.
4. The trip to Wadi Tharthar was made on the road to Samarra that follows the Baghdad - Mosul railway. From Samarra, we traveled over open desert with no markers to guide the way. I am still at a loss to know how the driver knew where he was.
5. The road to Samarra is part of the Baghdad - Mosul road being built by a British contractor. In late March 1953, only about 50 km north of Baghdad was finished. It traverses flat territory so has no grades and only a few gentle curves. The finished road has an asphalt surface and is a full two-lane width. The remainder of the road to Samarra is a hard packed track, usable all year. It will accommodate and is used by heavy trucks at all seasons. The trip to Wadi Tharthar and return was made the same day.
6. The area about Wadi Tharthar is desert with a loose top soil covering broken, sharp edged rocks. Heavy vehicles under full load are apt to lose traction and the spinning wheels will scrape away the top soil, hit the underlying rocks and cut tires, often beyond repair. The best solution is a tire tread design with no wide spaces such as are used to get maximum road traction. A design that approaches a smooth tire pattern will tend to ride over the loose soil.
7. There are no service stations between Baghdad and Samarra.

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8. The road from Mosul to Erbil is of narrow two-lane width with a rough asphalt surface. It crosses a gently rolling agricultural area and has no serious grades or bad curves. Bridges are low and cross wadies that are usually dry. They are only wide enough for two small vehicles and will not permit two large trucks to pass, but they are short and cause no serious bottlenecks. It will accommodate heavy transport at all seasons.

9. From Erbil to Shaqlawa, the road is of narrow two-lane width, part of it with poor asphalt surface and the balance water bound clay and gravel. It traverses a mountainous area and has long, steep grades and sharp curves that require a truck in good condition and well handled to cover it.

10. There are no service stations between Mosul and Shaqlawa.

11. Information about other roads is taken from a report [redacted]

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Motor Roads in Iraq

12. "Before the first World War, Iraq possessed only one important motor road, that between Baghdad and Aleppo running parallel with the River Euphrates up to Jarablos in Syrian territory. During the British occupation, however, many roads were constructed in all parts of the country for military purposes which were later developed by the Iraq Government, so that Iraq has now a total of 7,255 km of roads.

Baghdad Area

13. "Baghdad, the capital of Iraq, built on the eastern and western banks of the River Tigris and situated in the central area of the country, is the nerve center of railway and road transport. The main lines are Baghdad-Ramadi-Rutba Road to the west up to the Syrian Frontier - 315 kms.

14. "All asphalted and plain desert route. This route was first started by Nairn brothers in 1923 and is used for passenger and goods transport between this country, Damascus, and Beyrouth.

Baghdad-Mosul-Tel-Kotchek - 497 kms

15. "The Iraq State Railways link with the Taurus Express and run almost parallel to an unasphalted road passing through Samarra, an important pilgrimage route.

Baghdad-Baguba-Kirkuk - 239 kms

16. "There is a railroad and a motor. The railroad is mostly used for the transportation of mercantile goods to Kirkuk and from thence by motor vehicles for distribution of goods and material belonging to the Iraq Petroleum Company as well as some of the tobacco from the northern area carried by the railways. The motor road is bad and only a small portion of it asphalted. However, it takes its fair share in the transportation of tobacco and mercantile goods. This route is in the Development Board program for early construction.

Baghdad-Khanakin - 130 kms

17. "The railway here runs very close to the Persian frontier in the east. All the refined oil and the crude oil of the Khanakin Oil Company [an affiliated company of the Iraq Petroleum Company], and goods in transit to Iran are transported by rail. The motor road which runs almost parallel to the railway line takes its own share of the transportation.

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Baghdad-Karbala-Najaf - 216 kms

18. "The first part of this road up to Karbala is asphalted and the rest is plain road. The second part from Karbala to Najaf is very sandy. These two towns of Karbala and Najaf are holy cities for the Shia sect of the Moslems. Tens of thousands of pilgrims from all parts of Iraq, Iran, India, and Afghanistan flow in during the pilgrimage seasons. During these seasons 80 per cent of the buses in Baghdad switch over to this route; but still cannot cope with the congested situation, and therefore, hundreds of trucks are recruited for the purpose.

Baghdad-Kut-Amara Road - 377 kms

19. "No railway connections. There is a motor road which is not in good condition; but it is the only means of road conveyance for goods and passengers from both ends. The river traffic is slow and its use confined to the winter months when the river level is high and navigable.

Baghdad-Basra Road - 478 kms

20. "The Iraqi State Railways link the Iraqi Port Basra in the south with the Taurus Express in the North. The total network to Tel-Kotchok is 978 kms. Along the entire line of this route lies a fertile wheat and barley growing belt. Here also, along the railway line there is an un asphalted motor road, in good condition. This road is used considerably during the fruit and vegetable seasons.

Mosul Area

21. "The major part of the main roads in the north are asphalted, partly for military reasons to ease troop movements by making the mountains accessible to motor traffic in the event of a Kurdish revolt, and partly to facilitate the transportation of agricultural and pastoral products. This does not, however, apply to all roads, as several hundreds of kilometres are very bad indeed and become literally unpassable during severe winter conditions.

22. "The main roads emanating from this Liwa are:

Mosul-Habil-Kirkuk - 183 kms

23. "Is asphalted all through. The first [87 kms] pass through small hills, but the next 96 kms pass through a level area.

Mosul-Baiiji-Samarra-Baghdad - 408 kms

24. "The first portion up to a distance of 114 kms passed Sharqat is asphalted. The remaining part of about 294 kms through Samarra to Baghdad is unpaved and sandy.

Mosul-Amadiya - 159 kms

25. "Is an asphalted but mountainous road.

Mosul-Zakho - 114 kms

26. "Is also asphalted but mountainous.

27. "There are several divisions of truck roads over 600 kms long leading to agricultural and fruit growing districts such as Makhmur, 99kms, Shokhan, 76 kms, Agra, 85 kms, and Tall-Afar, 117 kms.

Kirkuk Area

28. Besides its very extensive oil fields, Kirkuk is a potential agricultural area and an important link with the famous tobacco growing fields of Sulaimandy Liwa. Kirkuk has a railway connection with Baghdad which is also linked

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with Erbil now, and the main motor routes are:

Kirkuk - Sulaimaniya - 115 kms asphalted but mountainous
 Kirkuk - Erbil - 96 kms asphalted
 Kirkuk - Baghdad - 239 kms - See under Baghdad
 Kirkuk - Koy-Sanjak - 168 kms - A tobacco growing area, very rough track road

Sulaimaniya Area

29. "This Liwa supplied 95 per cent of the tobacco consumed in the country and is also an important agricultural area.

30. "Its main roads to the surrounding villages mostly to the tobacco growing areas is as follows:

Sulaimaniyan - Kirkuk - 115 kms

31. "Asphalted, mountainous, and bumpy at places.

Sulaimaniyah - Mirza Rustam - Bunkard - 104 kms

32. "Asphalted and mountainous.

Sulaimaniyah - Sayid Sadek - Penjwin - 145 kms

33. "All asphalted except the first portion of 24 kms.

Sulaimaniyah - Kharmal - 85 kms

34. "Only a portion of 20 kms asphalted.

Sulaimaniyah - Sayid Sadek - Halabja - 75 kms

35. "Only the first portion of 24 kms not asphalted.

Sulaimaniyah - Qara Dagh - 48 kms

36. "Rough, stony track road.

Dulaim Liwa [Ramadi]

37. "Ramadi is on the Baghdad-Rutbah-Damascus motor road, situated on the River Euphrates. It is a pastoral and agricultural area of considerable value. Ramadi has assumed a considerable importance firstly because of this motor road, secondly because of its proximity to the RAF Station, Habbaniyah, and, thirdly, because of the Habbaniyah Flood Relief escape.

38. "The only other motor road in this Liwa besides the Rutbah-Damascus Road, is very rough stony road leading to Hit, Haditha, Ana, and from thence to Hassiba 307 kms near the Syrian frontier at Abu Kamal.

Hilla Area

39. "This Liwa is on the River Euphrates and is an important agricultural, pastoral, fruit and vegetable growing area only 10 kms from the ruins of Babylon and 23 kms from Kish of the Chaldeans, both of great historical and archaeological value.

40. It is on the Baghdad-Basra railway and motor road, 112 kms away from Baghdad southwards. Its other important roads are:

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Hilla-Karbala

41. "Karbala is a holy city of the Shia Sect of the Moslems. This 56 kms road is un asphalted, stony, and unpaved.

Hilla-Kifl-Kufa-Mejaf

42. "The last terminus is another very important pilgrimage center. 86 kms from Hilla. This road is un asphalted and unpaved.

Hilla-Hashimiya-Divaniya - 89 kms

43. "Un asphalted and level road, certain portions subject to quick deterioration during the winter months.

Amara Area

44. "Amara is a grain and rice growing center. It is only 194 kms from Basra. There is no railway connection with any adjoining district. Its motor roads to Basra and Baghdad are unpaved and certain portions very rough.

Nasiriyah Area

45. "Nasiriyah is situated 240 kms to the north of Basra. There is a railway connection and a motor road which is not paved, but in good condition.

ROADS IN IRAQ, 1952Kilometers

Liwa	Asphalted	Non-asphalted	Track
Mosul	625,250	68,750	797,450
Kerbil	286,500		417,500
Kirkuk	119,420	121,000	120,300
Suleimaniya	154,600	125,000	103,500
Baghdad	100,420		191,420
Diyala	142,620	77,000	310,500
Kut			640,520
Dulaim	598,410		413,300
Hilla	77,870		187,100
Divaniya			419,550
Kerbala	41,740		116,800
Basra	40,950		99,500
Muntafik			490,270
Ammarah			338,445
	2,217,810	391,750	4646,355

Recapitulation: Total - 7,255,875

Asphalted - 50%

Non-asphalted - 5%

Track - 65%

46. "Plans for Development: A proposal has been put forward by the Public Works Department for the asphalting for an additional 2,000 kms during the next five years with a loan of 15,800,000 Dinars from the Development Boards."

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